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Ex-CBS News Chief Tells of Sharing Information With C.I.A. in '50's

By LES BROWN

Sig Mickelson, who was president of CBS News in the 1950's, said yesterday that his organization had cooperated with the Central Intelligence Agency to the extent of "sharing information" under implied instructions from William S. Paley, chairman of CBS Inc.

Mr. Mickelson was responding to statements made Thursday in a newspaper interview by Richard S. Salant, who said that when he became president of CBS News in 1961 he severed all the organization's ties with the C.I.A. that had existed in Mr. Mickelson's administration.

"I didn't raise an eyebrow about cooperating back then," said Mr. Mickelson, who is now president of Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty. "But those were different times, 23 years ago, and it seemed perfectly normal to do it. I assumed that in the cold war climate that existed all the networks were cooperating."

In a telephone interview from London, Mr. Mickelson said that, on request, the network had provided intelligence agents with "outtakes," or portions of news film not broadcast on the air, that usually dealt with disturbances in foreign countries.

Meetings With Dulles

He added that on occasion CBS correspondents, upon their return to this country, met over dinner with Allen W. Dulles, then Director of Central Intelligence, to discuss informally "what was happening in the world."

Some agents called him at various times asking questions he considered innocuous, Mr. Mickelson said, and he generally gave them the information they sought.

"These practices began in October of 1954, just after I returned from a trip abroad," Mr. Mickelson recalled. "I was called in to see Mr. Paley and found two C.I.A. agents in his office. It was then that I learned our man in Stockholm, Austin Goodrich, had been placed there by the C.I.A. and was working for them."

"Since this took place in Paley's presence, I concluded that cooperation with the agency carried the chairman's blessings. I felt, in fact, that in working with the C.I.A., to the extent we did, we were carrying out Paley's instructions."

Mr. Paley, who was at home ill yesterday, said through an intermediary that he had no recollection of that episode. Moreover, according to his aide, E. Kidder Meade Jr., when Mr. Paley and Mr. Mickelson discussed that alleged meeting previously "Sig seemed quite hazy about it, too."

Julian Goodman, chairman of the National Broadcasting Company, was executive vice president of NBC News at the time of Mr. Mickelson's tenure with CBS, said that to his knowledge neither his company nor any correspondents for NBC News had cooperated with the intelligence agency during that period.

"We had some visits from C.I.A. agents, but they amounted to nothing but conversation," Mr. Goodman said. "It was our policy not to make available any materials that were not on the public record, whether notes or outtakes."

Executives who were in charge of ABC News in that period could not be reached yesterday.

Both Mr. Goodman and Mr. Salant said that it was essential for American news agencies to maintain a distance from Government intelligence agencies so that

foreign governments could be assured that reporters were journalists and not spies.

It is especially important to establish that fact, they said, with foreign countries whose own news reporters are allied with their governments and in some cases serve as agents.

Changing Values Noted

Speaking of an interview he gave to The Los Angeles Times, Mr. Salant said that he had raised the matter of the network's past cooperation with the C.I.A. only to illustrate to the reporter how journalism values had changed over the years.

"We can condemn cooperation with Federal agencies now, but we couldn't then—there was the cold ear, and we were less sophisticated in those times," Mr. Salant remarked.

"I'm sure it was not uncommon for reporters coming back from Europe to debrief themselves to the C.I.A. or for news organizations—newspapers as well as broadcasters to have a natural and easy relationship with agencies of the Government," he said.

Mr. Salant said that his first inkling that his predecessor, Mr. Mickelson, had permitted cooperation with the C.I.A. came in his first week in the new position. He was visited then, he said, by a man who identified himself as the C.I.A. liaison with CBS. He said that he had told the agent that there would no longer be a sharing of information.

He said that, in trying to sever all connections between CBS News and the agency, he had learned of the interrogation of correspondents, the turning over of outtakes and the practice of permitting C.I.A. agents to sit in the control room

so that they could hear the incoming radio reports from foreign correspondents. The last made the agency privy to a number of reports that were never put on the air.

Mr. Salant said it had also been his impression that Theodore Koop, who then was Washington bureau chief for CBS News and later became the corporation's Washington lobbyist, also cooperated fairly regularly with the C.I.A.

Mr. Kop could not be reached for comment yesterday.

"This giving up of information was all rather innocent," Mr. Salant said. "I don't know of any money that changed hands. But I felt it was unhealthy for journalists to do, and I had it all stopped."

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